

Notes from the Chief of Ordnance...

Folks, below are significant excerpts of the feedback I recently received from our senior Ordnance person on the CY 02 SFC Board. I'd like to share this information with you. I recognize that most of this is not new, but it deserves leaders' consideration and continuing emphasis. This is invaluable information for OPDs/NCOPDs. Additionally, note my comments referencing the feedback concerning **Training Instructor**.

MITCHELL H. STEVENSON
Chief of Ordnance

3. Competence assessment (strengths and weaknesses).

a. Primary zone.

(1) Performance and potential (particularly leadership opportunities).

CMF 35: (a) Strength(s): Soldiers serving and performing well as Operations Sergeants, Platoon Sergeants, Squad Leaders, Section NCOs, Team Chief, Land Combat Electronic Foreman, COMSEC Maintenance Supervisor, Apache Attack Helicopter System Supervisor, Instructor/Writer or Small Group Leader, Battle Staff NCO, Drill Sergeants and Recruiters were all considered favorably by the panel. Those more demanding assignments (indicated in the Regimental CSM's memo to the board), helped panel members to focus attention to those "tough jobs" Ordnance NCOs must perform well to be selected for promotion. To better serve the CMF 35 soldiers, it is important to identify the positions listed as "Duty Position" on the NCOER. In many cases, the duty position is listed as "Technician" but the duty description describes as Squad Leader or Platoon Sergeant job.

CMF 55: (a) Strength(s): Soldiers serving and performing well as Operations Sergeants, Platoon Sergeants, Drill Sergeants, Team Leaders, Response NCO, Instructor/Writer, Battle Staff NCO, and Recruiters were all considered favorably by the panel. Those more demanding assignments (indicated in the Regimental CSM's memo to the board), helped panel members to focus attention to those "tough jobs" Ordnance NCOs must perform well in to be selected for promotion.

CMF 63: (a) Strength(s): Soldiers serving and performing well as Senior Mechanics, Motor sergeants, Platoon Sergeants, Section NCOs, Maintenance Control Supervisors, Drill Sergeants, Recruiters, EO Advisors and as Acting First Sergeants were all considered favorably by the panel. Those more demanding assignments (indicated in the Regimental CSM's memo to the board), helped panel members to focus attention to those "tough jobs" Ordnance NCOs must perform well to be selected for promotion.

NOTE: The panel did not look favorably upon records for soldiers who had served for prolonged periods as Instructor/Writer (greater than 4 years). Soldiers that are in Instructor positions for more than four years need to be reassigned for career progression. Guidance suggests that a "Training Instructor" is a tough job; however, the instructor must have field-experience to be effective. We recommend that soldiers that go beyond three years be considered for reassignment as soon as possible. (Again, this is not new, and should not be viewed as a reason to not go be an instructor; on the contrary, we are working a broad set of initiatives to increase the value of instructor duty. All this tells our NCOs is that too much of a good thing can start to work against you . . . whether that be instructor duty, or any other duty assignment]

MITCHELL H. STEVENSON
Chief of Ordnance

(2) Utilization and assignments (particularly in PMOS)

(a) Strength(s): Generally, those NCOs who served outside their PMOS did well, provided they did not have a prolonged period away from the tough jobs, and maintained steady performance throughout their career file.

(b) Weakness (es): In most cases where NCOs worked for long durations away from their PMOS, there was a trend in marginal performance documented by both rater and senior rater.

(3) Training and education.

(a) Strength(s): Overall, most records reflected a strong desire for soldiers to continue in pursuit of college credits and correspondence courses that were relevant to their PMOS. It was not uncommon to find soldiers with tough assignments who had already completed at least a year of college with good number completing associates degrees. Some records showed bachelor's degrees and even a few masters/doctorate level schooling accomplished. CMF 35 had the highest percentage of soldiers with advance schooling in Ordnance. Additionally, a few records in CMF 63 show that soldiers are beginning to seek ASE certification in their related field - an initiative fully supported by the Ordnance Center.

(b) Weakness(es): The panel recognized the fact that college attendance is not mandatory for career progression. There were some NCOs that had little or no college hours completed. However, the panel gave additional consideration for those soldiers that took the initiative to seek additional civilian education over those that had the same opportunity but elected not to attain some college credit. Raters did not give the same emphasis to Army correspondence courses as civilian education.

(4) Physical Fitness.

(a) Strength(s): With only a few exceptions, most records showed NCOs are meeting the Army standards for physical fitness and military bearing. Records also show that NCOs took the initiative to help raise platoon/section APFT scores and assist those who need help by leading special group fitness programs.

(b) Weakness(es): There were still isolated instances where NCOs failed the APFT and did not meet HT/WT standards. Almost all inquiries to the field to validate AR 600-9 standards returned with positive results validated by battalion or higher level CSMs. Although not necessarily a negative trend, but a concern, is the number of NCOs that exceeded the HT/WT standard yet passed the tape test. In many cases, the weight was not just a few pounds over max, but 20-50 pounds over. When an NCOER reflected a high state of physical fitness, with rater bullet comments, few inquiries were initiated. However, when the NCO still appeared overweight, even though the record said, "meets the standard," the panel usually sent out an inquiry.

(c) An APFT score of 270 or above, with 90 percent in each event, reflects excellence in fitness, yet excellences were not always given to the soldiers.

b. Secondary zone.

(1) Performance and potential (particularly leadership opportunities).

(a) Strengths(s): The panel found that SZ soldiers are seeking out the tough assignments and performing extremely well. In some cases, they had already performed the toughest leadership positions, and readily accepted increased leadership responsibility (i.e. Acting PLT SGT/OPS SGT/Supervisor).

(b) Weakness (es): NCOs assigned outside their PMOS for extended periods performed at a lower level. However, there were very few soldiers being worked out of their PMOS.

(2) Utilization and assignments (particularly in PMOS).

(a) Strength(s): NCOs who served outside their PMOS did well, provided they did not have a prolonged period away from the tough jobs.

(b) Weakness(es): NCOs who worked outside their PMOS for extended periods, trended to be marginal performers. However, there were very few instances where soldiers were assigned outside their PMOS for more than one rating period.

(3) Training and education.

(a) Strength(s): SZ soldiers displayed a strong desire to pursue college credits and correspondence courses that were relevant to their PMOS. It was not uncommon to find soldiers with tough assignments who had completed at least an associates degree with some completing bachelors or masters degrees.

(b) Weakness(es): The panel recognized the fact that college attendance is not mandatory for career progression. However, the panel gave additional consideration for those soldiers that took the initiative to seek additional civilian education over those that had the same opportunity but did not do so.

(4) Physical Fitness.

(a) Strength(s): With very few exceptions, records showed soldiers meeting standards with initiative to actively seek the AFPT Badge and help increase physical fitness within their platoon/section.

(b) Weakness (es): There are still some isolated instances when soldiers were evaluated as not meeting AR 600-9 standards.

4. Other.

- Panel members favorably considered those comments that were fully justified with quantifiable/qualifiable bullet comments that clearly stated soldier responsibility and performance.

- The panel also noted that raters and senior raters were inconsistent about reflecting misconduct during rating periods. There were many instances of DUIs and other forms of misconduct resulting in General Officer Letter of Reprimands filed in the OMPF which were not reflected in the NCOER. Comments were not made in Army values, or "needs improvement" bullets by the rating chain. In most cases the rating chain seemed to "look the other way" if an NCO had been a high performer in all other regards. This sends the wrong message to the field, and basically leaves it up to the panel to be "the bad guy" by not favorably considering an NCO for promotion. The NCOER needs to reflect that the NCO used poor judgment, failed to meet Army values, and that this behavior does not support increased potential for advanced schooling and promotion.

- Official Photos. The panel identified several deficiencies during the selection process.

- (1) A small percentage (less than 2 %) had photos over 5 years old. None were over 7 years.

- (2) There were a significant number of packets without photos - this was especially true for NCOs considered in the Secondary Zone, yet many NCOs with several years TIG did not have a photo on record.

- (3) Uniform discrepancies were also noted including brass placed improperly and awards listed on Enlisted Record Brief (ERB) not matching the uniform worn. Of special note was the amount of soldiers wearing unit citations not in their ERB. It was clear that some NCOs did not have their photo reviewed by their NCO support channel prior to submission.

- Competence. All records reviewed by the panel members indicated CMFs 55 & 63 contain a group of highly skilled technicians who are also tactically proficient soldiers.